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OCI NO. 1541
COPY NO. 10

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
10 March 1954

PRE-GENEVA CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS - III

South Korean foreign minister asks "clarifications" on Geneva talks: Foreign Minister Pyun wrote Secretary Dulles on 3 March asking for "clarifications" on the Geneva conference before South Korea decides on whether to attend.

The foreign minister objected to the status of sponsor and "quasi-sponsor" given Moscow and Peiping, respectively, and asked whether the assurances regarding a "strictly Korean" peace conference which Dulles gave President Rhee last August hold good at Geneva. He argued that simultaneous discussions on Indochina and Korea implied a "package deal for the Orient" and said his government could not allow the enemy to shift back and forth between the issues as a bargaining tactic.

Pyun also inquired if a deadline would be placed on the proposed parley and whether the United States would "abandon" peaceful means and resort to force again "after the failure of the conference."

Ambassador Briggs reported on 6 March that Pyun's letter was clearly designed to obtain additional American commitments in return for South Korea's promise to attend the Geneva talks. He believes Seoul is seeking new concessions by trying to show that the Geneva parley is not the peace conference envisaged by the Korean armistice and, therefore, justifies new negotiations on South Korea's participation. He said Pyun's key request, demanding in effect that the United States resume the fighting if the conference fails to unify Korea, is an attempt to "blackmail" Washington into a commitment it has hitherto declined to give.

Peiping Radio reasserts Communist demands for Korean unification: Peiping Radio expressed "confidence" on 8 March that the foreign ministers at Geneva would "agree to put Korean unification to a vote of North and South Korea," adding that the conferees must "help the Korean people restore national independence and unity on the basis of settling their own questions by themselves."

State Dept. review completed

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Document No.	3
No Change In Class.	<input type="checkbox"/> 25X1
<input type="checkbox"/> Declassified	
Class. Change To	Class. Change To
Auth.: HR 702	
Date: 27 July 78	

The above information yields nothing new on possible Communist strategy at Geneva since proposals for the withdrawal of foreign troops, followed by all-Korean elections designed to insure Communist control of the whole peninsula, have been standard Communist demands since the truce negotiations began.

Moscow likely to demand invitation for Viet Minh representative: Pravda on 8 March attacked French Minister Bidault's recent statement that it is not necessary to invite representatives of Ho Chi Minh's government to Geneva and asserted that "it is impossible to solve the Indochina problem without considering the lawful right of her people." The article criticized those French leaders who "declare beforehand their unwillingness to hear representatives of the people of Indochina" and declared that the "people of Vietnam consider the government of the 'Democratic Republic of Vietnam' as the genuine expression of their will."

Moscow probably hopes to secure greater international recognition and prestige for the Ho government which it recognized in 1950 as the sole legitimate authority in Vietnam, just as it does for Peiping and Pyongyang. There are no indications that Moscow and Peiping will be willing to abandon the Viet Minh in order to achieve a truce in Indochina or to serve wider strategic objectives in Europe and Asia.